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Global Strategy for Collaborative Relationships and Partnerships: a preliminary concept note

Summary

This preliminary concept note outlining the rationale, proposed content and process for the development of the Global Strategy for Collaborative Relationships and Partnerships is presented to the Executive Board for discussion.

The Strategy will be designed to respond to the UNICEF Executive Board request for a forward-looking report on collaborations and partnerships that identifies the most effective mechanisms to leverage resources and results for children.

I. Introduction

1. At its first regular session in January 2007, the UNICEF Executive Board asked UNICEF, in decision 2007/1 (E/ICEF/2007/7/Rev.1), to present a report on partnerships, including an overview of existing partnerships, by the 2008 annual session. The Executive Board's request was made within the context of its review of the Global Framework for Action for the Ending Child Hunger and Undernutrition Initiative. In the following months, the Executive Board requested UNICEF to submit a forward-looking report that deals with the broad range of partnerships in which UNICEF is engaged. The final document was to present a vision through which UNICEF could most effectively leverage its own capacities and assets, and those of its partners and other stakeholders, to deliver better results for children.

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2. Since its inception, UNICEF has been working with partners to improve the lives of children. These partnerships are of various kinds: programmatic partnerships to achieve better outcomes for children in programme countries; partnerships in policy development at the global level; partnerships in resource mobilization; and partnerships in advocacy for the promotion of child rights. Of particular importance are the partnerships in programme implementation. They are a core part of the work of UNICEF in the field.

3. The country programmes of cooperation of UNICEF are implemented with partners at national and local levels. The country programme generally covers all five focus areas — and each cross-cutting area — of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006-2009, and supports national priorities and plans. There are myriad examples of such partnerships: community based-organizations such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Africa, which supports girls' education, and Tostan, which works to end female genital cutting; the many faith-based organizations that orchestrate community-level engagement in HIV/AIDS care and support for vulnerable children; and the thousands of local civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that help to implement emergency prevention and assistance in collaboration with government actors, United Nations partner agencies, and national and international NGOs.

4. In addition to these partnerships on the ground, UNICEF engages in partnerships and collaborative relationships at the regional and international levels to address issues of regional and global concern. Examples of such working together include the many longstanding global partnerships in health, whether in the area of malaria, polio or other diseases, and the most recent collaboration with Special Olympics International, launched in 2007 to promote fulfilment of the rights of children with disabilities. Partnerships for advocacy, such as work with child rights-based NGOs, are another key area, particularly in promoting the rights of children. The partnerships of UNICEF with parliamentarians including those in the Inter-Parliamentary Union have helped to promote a greater focus on child protection, such as the inclusion of child protection issues in legislation relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. Also important are partnerships and collaborative relationships for resource mobilization at all levels, many of which are forged and maintained at country level. From IKEA in India to the Nakumatt supermarket chain in Kenya, the private sector is making significant social investments to support child survival, protection, education and other areas critical for children. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF is working with Nickelodeon to use a charismatic cartoon character to inspire positive change in the lives of children.

6. UNICEF has a unique mandate in its responsibility for achieving a better life for every child, based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Mobilizing other stakeholders and partners to deliver greater and better results for children will achieve much more than UNICEF can accomplish alone. At the global, regional and national levels, the organization can play an important catalytic role in bringing together stakeholders and partners with diverse capacities and resources, accelerating better outcomes for children. The rights of the child and the Millennium Development Goals can be fulfilled only through such a mobilization of multiple actors and partners.

7. Within the development community, emphasis is increasingly placed on the collective and coherent efforts of all actors, including those within the United Nations system. With its mandate based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF provides the diagnostics on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for children and the fulfilment of children's rights. One important mechanism is the Situation Analysis prepared by UNICEF and partners. It is a key tool not only at the country level, providing the basis for the organization's own programming, but also at the regional and global levels, where it is increasingly being developed as an important basis for mobilizing key players to deliver more and better results for children. The Situation Analysis is a key output of the diagnostic work of country programmes of cooperation, shared with Governments, United Nations partners, other multilateral agencies, NGOs, the private sector and other interested partners.

8. The emphasis of UNICEF on outcome-based programming and results-based management, built on a strong evidence base, is making the organization a better partner. The knowledge base, data and statistics systems, which include DevInfo, help to ensure that progress for children is regularly tracked and monitored and that resources are channelled where they are most needed. The outcomes produced by the efforts of multiple actors working together, supported by a strong evidence base, will significantly impact the situation of children, and give better direction to collective interventions for achieving improved outcomes for children. This knowledge will provide the basis for strengthening partnerships and collaborative relationships further in more innovative and creative ways.

9. As UNICEF has a unique mandate, the organization also has a key role to play in convening multiple actors in this manner, setting out a framework for leveraging ideas, resources and actions for the benefit of children. UNICEF plays this role in collaborative relationships and partnerships at the global, regional and national levels. The concept of convening actors is central to Unite for Children, the rallying call of UNICEF. It was first tested in the *Unite for Children*, United against AIDS initiative, launched in 2005, which has leveraged ideas, resources and action from multiple actors. By using this catalytic power, UNICEF can continue to mobilize key players around HIV/AIDS and use the same methodology in relation to other critical issues for children. Building on *Unite for Children*, UNICEF will increasingly act as a key convener and facilitator in mobilizing a variety of stakeholders and partners in advocacy, effective collaboration and delivery for children, drawing in both public sector and private actors in support of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the realization of children's rights.

10. The changes in the international development landscape over the past decade have led to a more complex environment in this regard, marked by a growing number of donors and channels, including new foundations and public-private partnerships. This changed environment requires new multi-stakeholder approaches that bring together a range of players (government, civil society, private sector, private foundations) with complementary capacities and resources. While these new partnerships result in wider opportunities, they also require new and effective systems to manage the activities of multiple stakeholders. This is also the case with regard to the United Nations, given the recent developments in humanitarian reforms and system-wide coherence.

II. UNICEF engagement with stakeholders and partners

11. In 2006, the Office of Public Partnerships and the Evaluation Office completed a review of UNICEF work with civil society to analyse how UNICEF is performing as a partner. As a preliminary step towards a more comprehensive evaluation to be undertaken with the Evaluation Office in 2008, UNICEF Programme Division recently mapped out the organization's involvement in more than 170 Global Programme Partnerships (see paragraph 13). Private Fundraising and Partnerships recently produced a report that examined different forms of corporate engagement, recommending those most suited to UNICEF. The report also recommended a systematic approach for UNICEF in order to broaden its organizational capacity for effective engagement in such partnerships.

12. UNICEF engages in a wide range of partnerships with NGOs in the humanitarian sector to provide critical assistance to children in times of emergencies. A recent study, conducted with NGOs, pointed to progress in the way UNICEF implements humanitarian reform but indicated the need for the organization to strengthen partnerships further at the operational and strategic levels. In its humanitarian work, UNICEF is guided by "Principles of Partnership," a set of shared values and principles endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform, a forum of more than 40 humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

13. Global Programme Partnerships have been established to raise the visibility of issues and provide common platforms for working together by combining the strengths of public and non-State organizations and civil society. The partnerships have gradually become key institutional instruments helping developing countries to achieve universally shared goals of delivering urgently needed goods and services. These partnerships were conceived as a focused response to the global challenge requiring collective action to achieve better results in health, hunger and nutrition, HIV/AIDS, environment, trade, finance, security, gender equality and social protection. Many of these partnerships have generated new funding mechanisms and funding channels that have significantly transformed the nature of the resource base for development assistance and have redefined the business model for international aid. Other partnerships have remained focused on advocacy and knowledge development, mobilizing global action in key areas.

14. Global Public-Private Partnerships are increasingly becoming important initiatives in combining the forces of aid agencies and the private sector. The private sector itself is demonstrating a stronger commitment to socially and ethically responsible business practices, and social entrepreneurs are applying innovative solutions to various complex social challenges. UNICEF needs to engage further in matchmaking between innovative social entrepreneurs and development actors in the field, acting as a catalyst for private sector engagement that involves new thinking and approaches. Indeed, UNICEF will need to support the ethic of corporate social responsibility, as it applies to children, with innovative ways to leverage human and financial resources and expertise to secure better results for children.

III. An outline of the Strategy

15. The Strategy for Collaborative Relationships and Partnerships will help to guide the organization's strategic engagement with others. It will further help to address the rapidly evolving external landscape to position UNICEF as a partner of choice to deliver results for children.

The guiding principles in the development of the strategy will be:

(a) Ensuring that collaborations and partnerships, individually and collectively, are making the maximum possible contribution to achieving outcomes for children;

(b) Ensuring that children are consistently at the centre of the national and international socio-economic policy and development agendas;

(c) Supporting UNICEF efforts to scale up interventions and leverage resources for children.

16. The strategy will aim at:

(a) Mapping the current UNICEF partnership landscape;

(b) Bringing focus, clarity and priorities to UNICEF work in the area of collaborations and partnerships;

(c) Outlining various approaches to utilizing the convening, catalytic and leveraging roles of UNICEF;

(d) Identifying guiding principles, goals, strategic directions and implementation approaches for UNICEF work on collaborations and partnerships, focusing, in particular, on partnerships in which institutional investment is needed;

(e) Assessing organizational implications of existing and future models of working with partners;

(f) Assessing overall international trends in partnerships for development outcomes as well as emerging evidence on good practices;

(g) Understanding the complexities of governance mechanisms with certain partners, and the role of UNICEF therein;

(h) Mapping mechanisms for partnership management and evaluation.

IV. Process

17. A consultative process will be pursued for the development of the strategy, for discussion at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009. The strategy will build on the global mandate of UNICEF as well as on the diversity of experience that covers different regional and country levels, and on the range of stakeholders and partners for children. The development of the strategy will support ongoing work reassessing the implications, legal or other, of statutory membership in existing partnerships, including in their governance structures.

18. The process will be informed by strategic evaluations and assessments of the ongoing work of UNICEF with key partners. This will include the 2006 review of UNICEF work with civil society and a new evaluation of UNICEF engagement in

Global Programme Partnerships to analyse and assess a representative sample of such partnerships, drawn from across the spectrum of the UNICEF portfolio. A series of case studies will be undertaken to assess the relevance and quality of UNICEF engagement in the selected Global Programme Partnerships. In addition, a review of the outcomes of partnerships with private companies at all levels will be undertaken to complement the partnership analysis. This assessment will be important as a way of identifying the types of private partnerships, the operating modalities, and the range of various kinds of impact on the achievement of common goals for children.

19. A series of consultations with both internal and external stakeholders will be conducted to identify key issues and recommendations. Internal stakeholders will include headquarters, regional offices, country offices and National Committees for UNICEF. In addition, consultations will take place with multilateral partners engaged in a similar review (e.g., the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees); with civil society organizations (including humanitarian NGO consortia); with senior managers of Global Programme Partnerships; and private sector partners.

20. During the development of the strategy, UNICEF will ensure that Member States, including the Executive Board, are consulted on a regular basis.